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In recognition of Valentine's Day, Berrien County Health Department highlights its sexual health services

As Valentine's Day approaches, the Berrien County Health Department is reminding community members to celebrate love safely by getting tested for sexually transmitted infections at its Sexual Health Clinic.

BCHD's Sexual Health Clinic offers confidential and non-judgmental STI testing, treatment and education through in-person and telehealth appointments. Fast-track testing and walk-in services are also available to make testing simple and accessible.

"Getting tested is one of the easiest ways to take care of yourself and those you care about," said Dionne Rigozzi, BCHD's clinical and community health services supervisor. "Our staff provides a safe space to ask questions and get the information, testing and treatment you need to stay healthy."

Sexual Health Clinic appointments are available 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday at BCHD's Benton Harbor office, 2149 E. Napier Ave., and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at its Niles office, 1205 N. Front St. Walk-in services are available 1-4 p.m. Wednesday at both locations. Telehealth appointments are available 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday.

Community members may request an appointment online or by calling 269.926.7121.

The Sexual Health Clinic provides services and testing at lower rates than most other local health care providers, and most insurance plans are accepted.

According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, approximately 52,000 people in the state were diagnosed with one or more reportable STI in 2024, including syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia. Because many STIs can cause no symptoms but still be transmitted to partners, regular testing remains an important prevention tool.

MDHHS also offers comprehensive STI testing guidance for sexually active women, men, pregnant individuals, men who have sex with men, gender diverse persons and individuals with HIV. — STAFF REPORTS

Beware your emotions, they reveal your wants and your don't wants.
— Dino N. Fatouros

Prison inmate charged in fatal stabbing of inmate

An offender at the prison in Westville is charged with fatally stabbing a fellow inmate with a homemade knife.

Games Birkhead, 50, is charged in La Porte Superior Court 2 with Level 5 felony reckless homicide and Level 4 felony prisoner with a deadly weapon.

The victim, Edrick Young, died in September not long after having his heart pierced by the tip of a nail used to make the knife, authorities said.

According to court documents, the Indiana State Police investigation shows Birkhead and Young were friends but involved in a dispute over a lighter.

Young entered Birkhead's cell and started swinging a sock containing some type of hard object, police said.

At some point, Young was stabbed in the chest and soon collapsed before helped back to his cell.

No much, if any, blood was coming from his puncture wound.

Police said inmates asked Young if he wanted medical help but he refused, preferring not to draw attention to himself out of fear of being labeled a snitch.

Eventually, he was discovered by a staff member and taken to Franciscan Health then Memorial Hospital in South Bend where he died about five hours after the stabbing.

One of the offenders watching the encounter between the two men told investigators he thought they were "horse playing."

La Porte County Prosecutor Sean Fagan said a murder charge was not filed because the evidence indicates there was no intent to kill.

He said it appears the death resulted, instead, from the suspect's alleged reckless acts.

According to court documents, the victim was serving time for a drunk driving related death in the Indianapolis area while Birkhead was incarcerated for violating the terms of his home detention in Elkhart County.

Birkhead could face anywhere from a one to six-year sentence for the killing along with an additional two to 12 years on the remaining charge. — STAN MADDUX

Local Government Meetings

New Buffalo Times

Democracy Requires Transparency

CITY OF NEW BUFFALO
VANCE PRICE, MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL
MARK ROBERTSON, ROGER LIJEWSKI, KAREN GEAR, RICH KNOLL, VANCE PRICE
City Council meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30PM
CITY OF NEW BUFFALO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD
HOWARD MALES, MICHELLE HEIT, MICHELLE HANNON, PATTY IAZZETTO, BARBARA ANDERSON
Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM
SHERIFF BERRIEN COUNTY
Sheriff, Chuck Heit
Undersheriff, Greg Sanders
NEW BUFFALO AREA RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
Meets at 9AM on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (odd) at New Buffalo Township Hall, 17425 Red Arrow Highway New Buffalo
NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS BOARD
LISA WERNER, JOHN HASKINS, DENISE CHURCHILL, JENNIFER SUMMERS, VANESSA THUN, STEPHEN DONNELLY, GREG VOSBERG
The Board meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 6PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP BOARD
DAVID BUNTE, PAULA DUDIAK, LIZ RETTIG, RICHARD SULLIVAN, ARTHUR ANDERSON
Chikaming Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM
THREE OAKS
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7PM
VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
GRAND BEACH
Meets on the 3rd Wednesday at 5PM EST
KIMBERLY WOLNIK, CLERK-TREASURER
HARRY WALDER, JACK GRACE, ED SEBASTIAN, PETER DOERR, EDWARD BRANDES
MICHIANA
VILLAGE OF MICHIANA COUNCIL
Meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 1PM

Informal city gathering elicits community concerns

BY THERESE DONNELLY

Residents and property owners had a chance to voice concerns and questions during an informal meeting with city officials Saturday, Feb. 7.

New Buffalo Mayor Vance Price hosted the meeting at the New Buffalo Township Library Pokagon Room.

Many who attended the meeting wanted to know what can be done about "the pit" on North Whittaker, where a planned development stalled out after excavation work had begun. Price explained that the land is privately owned, which limits what the city can do as long as property taxes are paid. He added the owner had described tentative plans to use the lot for parking, or a recreational use, but any plans will need to go through the Planning Commission.

Price also said zoning ordinances restrict the size of any building on the site to three stories, which he said is discouraging potential buyers.

City Manager Darwin Watson said developers have inquired about the site but have said they cannot make a financially viable commercial building within the current limits.

Planning Commissioner Deb Schmidt, who attended the meeting as a resident, said proposed construction plans that exceeded the height limits have always been met with objections from residents.

"I think we have to accept that anything that goes in will be above current restrictions," she said.

Schmidt also asked about at Oselka Park. She noted park development plans had included an amphitheater on the west end of the park but so far it had not been created.

Price said now that the Parks Board has convened, there are plans for playground upgrades and improvements at the park.

Residents also asked about pedestrian safety in the downtown, both in winter and summer traffic. Price said the city has a grant for a traffic study to examine safety access for both pedestrians and vehicles.

The city is also preparing to begin the pedestrian bridge across the Galien River to the city beach. Watson said state permits are in place and the project will go out for bid this spring, with construction expected to be completed in the fall of 2026.

Residents asked about cannabis use in public areas of the city. While the city has not permitted cannabis retail, several businesses have opened in the township and customers sometimes travel into the city. While Michigan allows cannabis consumption on private property, it is a civil infraction to smoke in public, including the city beach. Price said billboard signs advertising cannabis businesses can legally drive on city and township roads but are not allowed to park in the city.

Parking enforcement was another issue for residents. Price said the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) supports three-hour parking limits in the summer but does not want paid parking in the downtown at this time. Instead, the DDA will pay for equipment and enforcement for parking in 2026, and the data collected from this period will be used to evaluate if paid parking should be introduced in the future.

Another concern was the limited internet bandwidth. Some residents said the slow connection is keeping some people from permanently moving to New Buffalo, as they would not be able to work from home.

No nation has friends only interests. — *Charles de Gaulle*

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La Porte students walk out of school to protest ICE

BY STAN MADDUX

Over 100 La Porte High School students walked out of class Monday to protest the ongoing arrests nationwide of undocumented migrants by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

They walked together late in the morning for about a mile to the county courthouse in downtown La Porte where they loudly and repeatedly chanted things like "ICE Out" beside passing motorists on Lincolnway.

Many of the demonstrators also held signs containing statements such as "Liberty and Justice for All."

The protesters then walked several blocks to the east along Lincolnway before returning to outside the courthouse before noon to continue the demonstration.

A number of passing drivers, including semi-truck operators, expressed their support by honking their horns.

Junior Riley Borders said it felt good to express her feelings on the matter.

"I feel exhilarated because I'm angry. Families should not be separated," said junior Riley Borders.

Senior Hannah Vaughn said she felt immigrants who entered the country under the Joe Biden administration should be allowed to remain since the mass deportations were ordered by a federal government that forced Native Americans onto reservations.

"How is it fair that we get to be on stolen land and they can't be," she said.

Sophomore Xavier Trusty held a sign referring to the book of Leviticus in The Bible about Israelites being commanded to treat foreigners living on their land with respect, love and equality without mistreatment.

Trusty also said he believes it's possible for the mass deportations to be ordered stopped in response to the demonstrations happening nationwide.

"I think all of us together, if we stand united, might be able to prove our point and show them that we're not going to be pushed around," he said.

A number of adults joined the protest to support the message from the students and protect them from any violent acts that might occur from someone with opposing views.

"I'm rallying behind them because they are brave enough to stand up for what they believe in," said La Porte area resident Kayla Ware.

Angie Henzman spent her lunch break from work to join the protest with a sign reading "De-Ice for Good."

Henzman said one reason she came out was out of concern for the safety of the students due to a lot of negative pushback on social media from ICE supporters.

"We wanted to support them. They need to be able to have their right to speak up," she said.

Court of Appeals ruling favors fired prison worker

BY STAN MADDUX

A ruling by the Indiana Court of Appeals could open the door to restoring due process rights for thousands of state employees.

The high court has ruled a fired Indiana State Prison worker can proceed with her previously dismissed claims.

Under the appellate court ruling, Callie Burke of Michigan City will be able to take her case back to La Porte Circuit Court for a decision on whether a state law preventing her from appealing her termination was unconstitutional.

The lower court previously granted a motion by the state to dismiss her case on grounds she missed a deadline to file documents related to her challenge by six months.

However, the appellate judges ruled the court dismissed the case based strictly on the missed deadline without considering her other legal claim that the law allowing her appeal to be denied was adopted by the state legislature in violation of the state constitution.

"This is a major victory for transparency for thousands of state employees," said her attorney, Shaw Friedman, who has a practice in downtown La Porte.

Friedman said the Civil Service Reform Act adopted by the state legislature in 2011 changed the designation of about 17,000 state employees from classified to non-classified workers.

Non-classified employees are considered people working at the will of the state who can be dismissed for any reason without appeal.

Friedman said the result was workers losing the due process rights they previously enjoyed for a very long time.

Under the state constitution, Friedman said legislative acts must be confined to a single subject.

In this case, Friedman said the CSRA without prior warning or notice was included in a nearly 300 page "must-pass" budget bill adopted just prior to the end of the 2011 legislative session.

Friedman said the CSRA was not a separate piece of legislation that should have went on the standard path of being considered and passed out of committee before advancing to the full House and Senate for a vote.

"Here was a massive overhaul of the state's merit system that was placed in the last minute of that session in a budget bill. Why not take it to a committee and let it go through the process, instead," he said.

Burke had been a correctional police officer and investigator for about seven years before fired in 2023.

Friedman said her termination was over allowing an inmate to use a cell phone and engaging in conservation with the offender without informing prison administrators.

Like any other law enforcement officer, though, Friedman said she had been doing that for years to collect information that might keep things like drugs out of the prison and protect any offenders or staff members from potential harm.

Friedman said Burke only wants a due process hearing that he believes will lead to her being returned to her job and back pay.

"If the challenge is successful, it could invalidate the 2011 Act, which essentially gutted a state merit service law that had been in place for decades, potentially restoring due process rights to thousands of public servants across the state," he said.

SCHOLASTICS

New Buffalo STEAM Building a hub of activity

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Since its debut in December 2022, the New Buffalo Area Schools' STEAM Building has become a hub of collaborative activity.

At the New Buffalo Area Schools Board of Education's Monday, Feb. 9, meeting, science teacher Richard Eberly said the school district decided this school year to have him use one of his teaching hours per day in the fall and spring to "work with other teachers to get them involved in STEAM activities as much as possible."

"The intent was to utilize the STEAM building more fully – I think we did that quite a bit," he said.

Students in Lisa Mollison's class used it to reenact a scene from the novel "Night" by building their own WWI ghetto.

There was an Engineering in the Arts class, where students built the props for the middle school play. Eberly taught the material science and engineering portion, and students applied the concepts to their building.

The Building Trades class has been making bee boxes for Envirothon.

"We started having all these carryovers in different sections – this group would have some time, or we noticed they had similar skills," he said, adding that the Building Trades class has pitched in with building props for the upcoming musical.

Building Trades students are also using the building to build a solar heat collector for the second maintenance building, which is the Building Trades class's latest project, to heat the engines of vehicles.

Police officers worked in there to create a full-size crime scene for the forensics class.

The high school band has also benefited from the STEAM building, as students engineered marching sticks there.

A student has even been working with Dwayne Whitmyer, director of the Performing Arts Center, outside of class on a physics project.

Eberly said that STEAM has been "popping up in other places," such as with the student-built solar charging stations in the courtyard.

When Mollison's students did a Henry David Thoreau-themed writing exercise while sitting in the retention pond area, Eberly said that the form needed to be changed so "a teacher could request a STEAM support activity without using the STEAM building at times."

Community members were exposed to projects on the building during Art Attack last year.

Recently, ecology students have been visiting the elementary school once a week to work with third graders. Eberly said there are plans to do a maple syrup demonstration, which has been done at the high school, at the school.

Considering all the different classes and groups that Eberly mentioned in his presentation, Superintendent Adam Bowen said that the "sky's the limit" regarding utilizing the building.

Through the listening tours while creating the strategic plan, it was requested that the building be widely used.

"Yes, it is for robotics but how can we incorporate that in the daytime for our students?" Bowen said, adding that the building has been promoting "community engagement and collaboration."

Board members approved the amended 2025-2026 budget.

Director of Finance Pano Arvanitis said that in 2025, the district levied 18 mills on all non-principal residence, non-qualified agricultural property, non-qualified forest property, non-supportive housing property, non-PSA-occupied property, and non-industrial property in the district to fund most general operations. Estimated revenue generated by this levy will be $17,628,612 or 86 percent of the district's revenues.

Other than a slight dip in 2018, Arvanitis said taxable values have continued to climb, with values being based on August non-homestead property tax values.

Regarding the General Fund's revenues, local revenues are $18.9 million, state revenues are $2.2 million and federal revenues are $96,493, with total revenues being $21.4 million. Expenditures are $21.9 million, with payroll and benefits being around 69 percent, giving the district a fund balance of 25.73 percent, or 3.1 months of operating expenditures. Arvanitis said that three or four months of expenditures represents an "adequately funded school."

This week, Bowen said that their Studer Education coach will be engaging with cabinet members on leadership development for the Strategic Plan. A survey will go out this month for students and then parents and an employee engagement one next month.

Board members approved voting for Tiana Harrison from Kalamazoo Public Schools for the MASB School Board 2026 Election.

Board members heard of the resignation of restorative paraprofessional Samantha Neimeyer and the hiring of Barb Reed as assistant girls' tennis coach.

Board member learned Emily Keller will be returning as director of the summer day camp.

To score points, you need a lot of consistent effort over the course of the game. If you're throwing it or running it in, it's not a big difference in terms of the score at all, obviously. But turnovers limit your scoring. That's the problem with turnovers. — *Tom Brady*

Raiders clinch division title in girls' basketball

BY STAN MADDUX

The Red Arrow Raiders clinched the title in their division of the Berrien Cass St. Joseph Conference in girls' high school basketball with a commanding victory at home on Thursday, Feb. 6.

The Raiders improved to 5-0 against teams in their division by defeating Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School 46-25.

Head Coach Jason Alexander said he was especially pleased with the shooting of his team, which nailed seven three-point shots, and how his players moved the ball until finding open shooters.

"We've been trying to get our half-court offense going so, hopefully, this is a good sign," he said.

The Raiders jumped out to an 8-0 lead then scored the next seven points beginning with junior Laney Strother hitting a 10-foot baseline jump shot.

Sophomore Lila Lugbill then drove the baseline for a lay-up before junior Harper Bowman hit a three-point shot.

The Lakers didn't score until about two minutes left in the first quarter.

The final buckets of the period for the Raiders came from a three-point shot by Strother and lay-up from junior Emma Strother off a pass from Lugbill.

The second quarter started with Lugbill grabbing an offense rebound and putting the ball back up for a short bucket to give the Raiders a 20-point lead.

After a bucket from the Lakers, sophomore Addison Lynch nailed a three-point shot.

Junior Shyann Spaulding off a pass from junior Peyton Swain later scored from close to the rim before Strother sank another three-point shot to extend the lead to 25 points.

The lead grew to 30 points when Lynch dribbled the ball the length of the court for a lay-up.

Offensively, the Lakers went on a tear of their own to make the score 34-12 at halftime.

Any thoughts of a comeback for the Lakers were pretty much over early in the third period when the Raiders scored seven of the next eight points.

The run began with Lynch grabbing an offensive rebound close to the rim then putting the ball back up and into the net.

A short time later, Lynch nailed a three-point shot from the baseline just prior to Spaulding making an eight-foot jump shot.

Lynch led the Raiders with 13 points.

Spaulding had 10 points while Strother and Bowman each scored eight points.

Alexander said winning the division in their conference was a goal after sharing the conference title last year with the Lakers, who fell to 1-10.

Alexander said his team also played well on defense for the most part.

He also complimented guards Strother and Seifert for controlling the tempo of the game on offense.

The Raiders improved to 5-7 overall on the season.

From the Bleachers

COLUMN BY KURT MARGGRAF IN CHICAGO

The Super Bowl just ended and with it, another outstanding NFL season.

Two participants who haven't been there for a while battled it out, but in the end Seattle beat New England by a score of 29-13.

The game itself was a defensive battle and the Seahawks were pretty much in control for the entire game. But, as almost everyone knows, the Super Bowl is so much more than just a football game.

This year the 60th Super Bowl took place and as far as I can remember, I attended my 59th Super Bowl party. Old friends get together with copious amounts of food and drink and they start betting with each other.

How long will the singer take to sing the Star Spangled Banner? Will the coin flip end up heads or tails? Winner, score, mvp? What color will the Gatorade be when they douse the winning coach? Squares, strips, etc. Sharing top billing with the game are the commercials.

This year my favorites were the Budweiser commercial where the Clydesdale protected the baby bird that ended up being a soaring eagle, and the Dunkin' Donuts spot that featured many famous Hollywood actors and actresses. Companies pay millions to run an ad, so they put their best foot forward.

So the football season came to an end and now the machinations begin to start the offseason. Free agency, the college football draft, and all the activities that make the NFL offseason are just around the corner and before you know it, training camps will be opening and the beat will go on.

The Bears, after becoming competitive again this season, will attempt to pick it up a notch and return to the Super Bowl for the first time since 2006, or, even better, win one for the first time since 1985.

The Olympics started last week and the United States suffered a tough break early in the competition.

Lindsey Vonn, the 41-year-old downhill skier who overcame a serious knee injury to make the team, suffered a broken leg when she took a nasty spill.

I thought it might be difficult to enjoy the Olympics this year because of the political divide, but the participants are putting politics aside, so I am too and will enjoy watching the athletes who have put in years of hard work competing to be the best.

So the Super Bowl is over, and by the time this goes to press, pitchers and catchers will have reported for spring training.

The football and baseball seasons keep getting longer, and it's no wonder due to the tremendous economic growth in both sports. In any event,

I am looking forward to seeing the Cubs and Tigers compete for the championship and the White Sox come out of their doldrums and become competitive again. The prospect of having some really good teams to root for is intoxicating.

Ernie Banks said, "The only way to prove that you're a good sport is to lose."

Be kind. Talk to you next week. Peace, love, and happiness.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE New Buffalo Times — SINCE 1942

Bison basketball suffers loss in home game

BY STAN MADDUX

The New Buffalo High School boys' basketball team suffered a costly loss in a home game not decided until the final seconds on Friday, Feb. 6.

The Bison (10-7) lost to Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School 43-41.

New Buffalo trailing the entire game took the lead with less than two minutes left in the fourth quarter on a three-point shot from the baseline by sophomore Colten Lijewski.

The Lakers regained the lead on a short bucket then soon went up by two points on a free throw with five seconds left.

The Bison had a chance to tie or win the game, but they were unable to get off a shot before the clock ran out after senior Sam Tripp a mishandled a pass near half court.

The loss cost the Bison any chance of winning the title in their division of the Berrien Cass St. Joseph Conference and snapped a six-game winning streak.

Head Coach Nate Tripp said it's a game his team should have won but many players were not at full strength due to sickness and one player was still recovering just days after undergoing Lasik surgery on his eyes to improve his vision.

"We're not going to make excuses. If your number is called and you're on the court you better play the right way and we did not play the right way," he said.

The New Buffalo offense was shut down in the first half by an aggressive zone defense that made it difficult to find open shooters even from the outside.

Senior Lucas Forker, a 6'4" center, scored the first three field goals for the Bison but he had to go up strong toward the rim while swarmed by defenders for two of the buckets.

He also had to work hard for most of his other buckets close to the rim while players looked to for their outside shooting always seemed to have a hand close to their face.

Tripp said he made some adjustments that allowed his shooters to get a few more open shots in the second half.

"The defense was incredible. Hats off to Our Lady of the Lake. They had a better strategy than we did tonight by far," he said.

The Lakers also had several thunderous blocked shots including one just before the Lakers extended their lead to eight points late in the third quarter.

Buckets from Forker and Trevor James helped the Bison cut the lead to two points going into the fourth quarter.

Eventually, the Bison tied the score on another bucket from James with less than two minutes left in the game.

New Buffalo City Police Department and NBHS SADD teams in front of the Plungester

The Berrien County Sheriff's Office

The Berrien RESA team by the Plungester

Taking the plunge for Special Olympics at Polar Plunge 2026

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

It was another year of plungers surpassing their goal of "freezing for a reason" at this year's Southwest Michigan Polar Plunge, which took place at Watermark Brewing C.O.. in Stevensville Saturday, Feb. 7.

The goal for this year's plunge, which featured 350 plungers, was to raise $105,000 for Special Olympics Michigan.

A Feb. 7 Watermark Brewing Facebook post said that $110,000 (with the number continuing to climb) had been raised.

The funds raised by plungers will help Special Olympics Michigan provide year-round training and services to over 23,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities across the state at no cost to them. As of earlier this week, around $1.1 million had been raised by 4,745 plungers.

Berrien County Sheriff Chuck Heit, who sits on the committee for the Southwest Michigan plunge, said that the 17-member, Super Mario Bros.-themed Berrien County Sheriff's Office team had recruited a younger set of plungers this year.

"We have a number of family members from our sheriff's office that are participating," he said.

As was tradition, the Sheriff's Office was in a friendly competition with the New Buffalo Township Fire Department in terms of fundraising. Heit said that the Sheriff's Office was in first place and passed the 35-member "Toy Story"-themed Berrien RESA team for the last couple of days, but Berrien RESA had surpassed them again.

The plunge is presented by the Law Enforcement Torch Run, a movement of volunteers dedicated to increasing awareness and funds for Special Olympics Michigan athletes across the state. A major fundraising and public awareness vehicle for Special Olympics, Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics has more than 100,000 Law Enforcement and Corrections participants around the world, according to Special Olympics Michigan's website.

"Law enforcement's always been involved in helping Special Olympics through the Torch Run, so this just an event that we can give back and we're very appreciative to those who donate," Heit said.

As of that morning, New Buffalo Township Fire Chief Jamie Flick said the seven-member fire department team had raised $5,655 and believed they were sixth overall in fundraising.

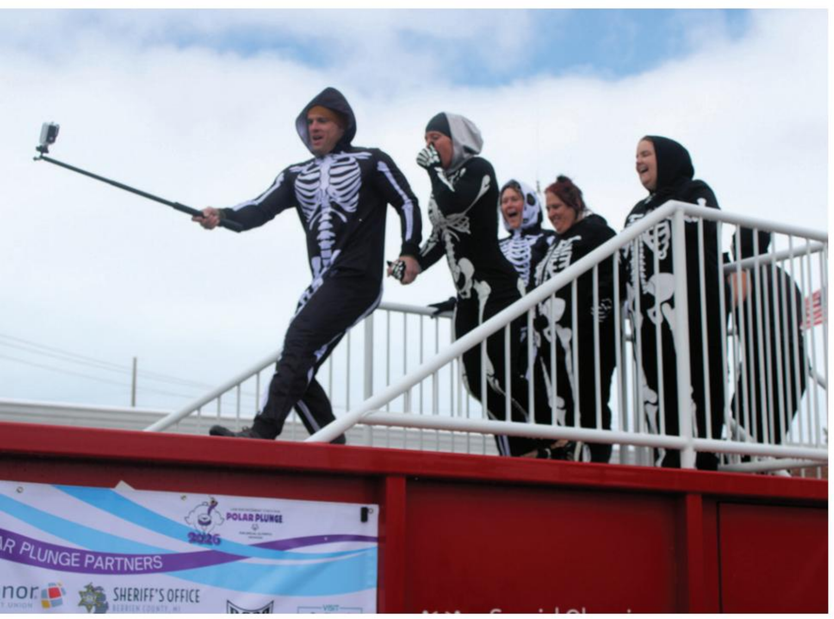
"We're crazy and it's a good cause" is why they do it.

"It helps out a lot of kids and we're happy to freeze for a couple of minutes and help them out," he said.

This year's five-member New Buffalo City Police Department team featured two Polar Plunge alumni, Courtney Severn and Brianna Schmitz, and two newcomers, Susan Wiederman and Jacob Klynstra.

"It's for a good cause and to raise awareness and just help out the best that we can - that's why I put myself through the freezing cold," Severn said.

Schmitz, who's the school resource officer for New Buffalo Middle and High schools, said that her seven years



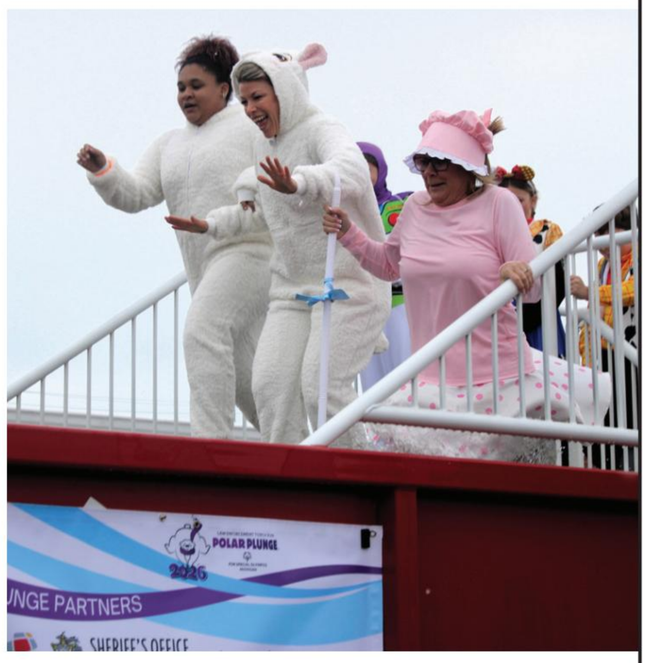
The Berrien County Health Department team

The crowd gathers at Watermark Brewing

Members of the Berrien County Sheriff's Office team

Costumed characters take the plunge

Costumed characters take the plunge in the Plungester



plunging inspired her to get New Buffalo High School's SADD chapter involved.

"We love doing it for the Michigan Special Olympics and raising money for the kids doing what they want to do on the other sports teams," she said.

Severn said that they were able to raise over their goal this year, which was $2,000.

New Buffalo High School junior and SADD member Riley Castle Brow, who wasn't plunging this year and was cheering from the sidelines, said that this was the second year SADD was taking the plunge.

"I love volunteering my time, I love fundraising and doing things I'm really passionate about and giving people the opportunity to do sports is something I'm really passionate about," she said, adding that she works with the student trainer to ensure students can get back into sports.

SADD engages in community-minded events throughout the year, such as through toy drives, a student senate food drive and funding the schoolwide talent show.

According to its website, Polar Plunge is the biggest fundraiser for Special Olympics Michigan.

This year, Special Olympics Michigan planned to host 27 Polar Plunge events throughout the state. More information can be found at www.somi.org.

The Watermark Brewing team by the Plungester

Sheriff Chuck Heit takes the plunge

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Learn about 'Berrien's Extraordinary Ecology' at the library

An indoor presentation, "Berrien's Extraordinary Ecology," will take place at noon at New Buffalo Township Library Saturday, Feb. 21.

Pat Fisher, president of the Harbor Country Hikers, will cover a wide range of topics such as how the latest glaciers shaped Southwest Michigan and Northwest Indiana and how rubble piles, meltwaters, strong westerly winds, sandy soils, lake-moderated climate, and the convergence of large-scale ecological systems established one of the county's most geologically and biologically diverse regions.

This presentation effectively connects the various natural, historical, and community elements observed on local trails, offering a comprehensive view of the local landscape. By integrating these components, the presentation helps users understand the "why" behind the scenery, the land's history, and the importance of stewardship.

Everyone is welcome to attend this event sponsored by The Friends of the New Buffalo Library. For more information, including driving directions, visit the Hikers' website, www.harborcountryhikers.org, or their Facebook page. — STAFF REPORTS

Lakeside Association launches the 2026 Scholarship Program

Applications are now open for the 2026 award considerations for the Lakeside Association Scholarship Program.

The Lakeside Association will continue its longstanding tradition of awarding scholarships to deserving graduates of River Valley High School. The Association considers these financial contributions to be a key focus of its mission to "Build Community for Lakeside and Our Neighbors."

"It is our honor to help deserving graduates get a jump start on their academic career, and a step forward in life," Shannon Ensing, committee chair, said.

Seniors graduating from River Valley High School, home schooled seniors and seniors who live in River Valley School District but are "school of choice" elsewhere are welcome to apply. The recipient must attend a college/university, or an accredited training/vocational program. Scholarships are based on academic performance, community involvement, extracurricular activities (school clubs, athletics, music, theater), work experience, and future goals. A minimum of three scholarships will be awarded for a total minimum of $5,000. Please contact Stacey Vetter (svetter@rivervalleyschools.orgapplication. Applications are due to Vetter by Friday, Feb. 27.

The Lakeside Association is a volunteer organization in Lakeside, Michigan, with a mission to "Build Community for Lakeside and Our Neighbors." Through events, gifts, projects and advocacy, the association aims to bring value and meaning to the residents with initiatives that Connect, Preserve and Celebrate. A hallmark activity of the association is the annual gifting of scholarships for local high school students pursuing a college degree or vocational certification. — STAFF REPORTS

CHURCH OF THE MEDIATOR TO HOST 'SHROVE TUESDAY' GATHERING

The Episcopal Church of the Mediator will hold its annual Shrove Tuesday (aka Mardi Gras) gathering and Pancake Supper beginning at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 17.

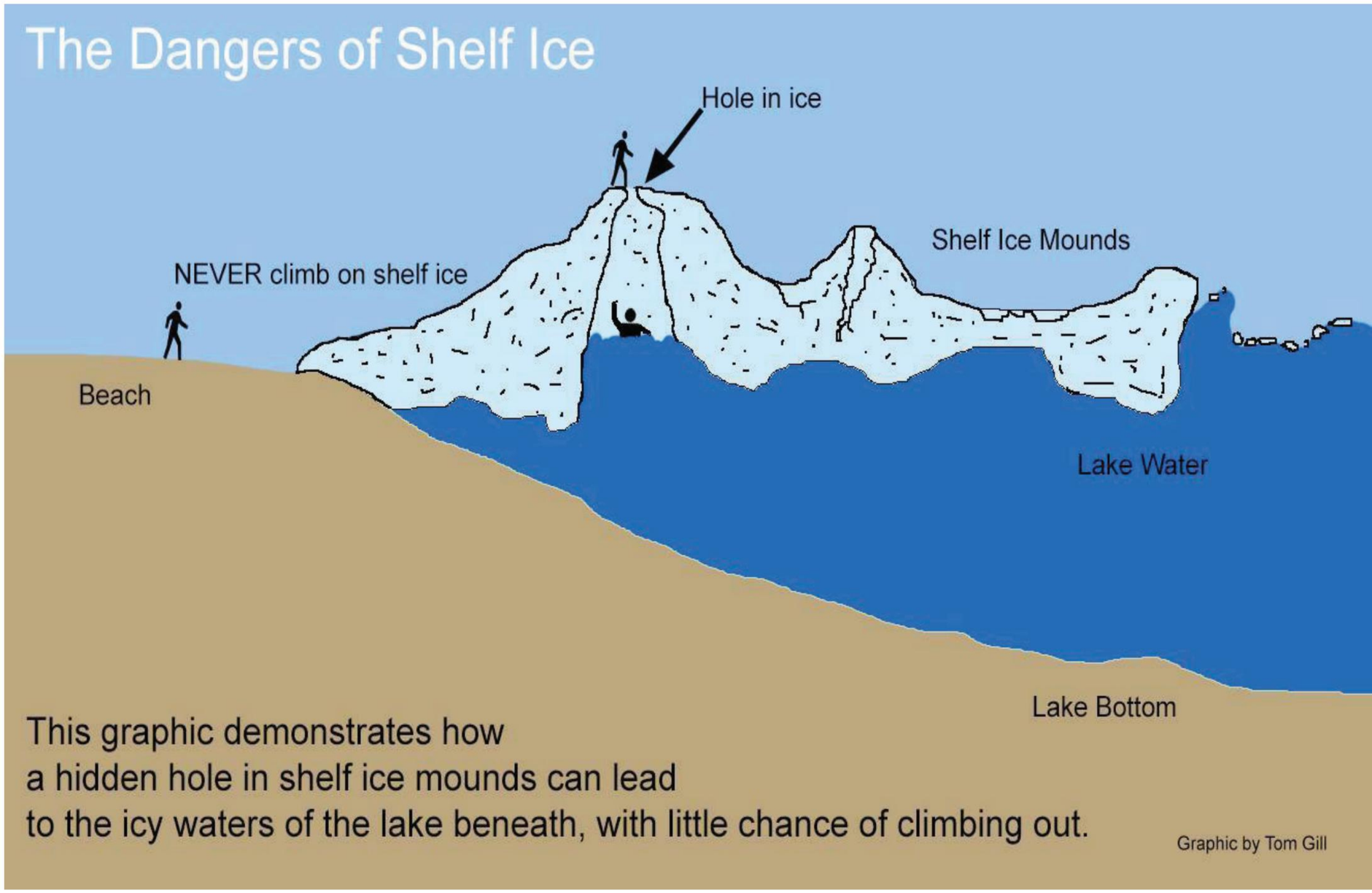
Attendees will gather in the church bell tower to end the season after Epiphany in the traditional way—by burning the palms and burying the alleluias. Palms will be burned outside on the belltower entrance walk to create the ashes for the Ash Wednesday service at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18. At 5:30 p.m., a gathering will be held to eat pancakes, play games and have fun in the church basement. — STAFF REPORTS

PUBLIC NOTICES

VILLAGE OF GRAND BEACH

PARKS & BEACHES COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

The Village of Grand Beach Parks and Beaches Committee will host a Public Hearing Friday, March 6th, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. ET to review the Parks & Beaches Master Plan with the community. The hearing will be held at Village Hall, 48200 Perkins Blvd, Grand Beach, MI 49117. A copy of the Master Plan has been posted and will remain available online and in Village Hall for a period of thirty days. Residents may submit written feedback in the Village office or via electronic submission. We encourage all residents to attend.


The Dangers of Shelf Ice
Hole in ice
NEVER climb on shelf ice
Shelf Ice Mounds
Beach
Lake Water
Lake Bottom
This graphic demonstrates how
a hidden hole in shelf ice mounds can lead
to the icy waters of the lake beneath, with little chance of climbing out.
Graphic by Tom Gill

Get local help with your Medicare questions

I'm Marcie Ritter, a licensed sales agent in Southwest Michigan/Northern Indiana. When it comes to Medicare, it's important to consider all of your options. What works well for your neighbor may not be the best fit for you. I know the ins and outs of Medicare, and I'm ready to answer your questions and help you find a plan that fits your needs. **Make the most of my knowledge and experience to:**

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- **Get help comparing plans**
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- **Make enrolling in a plan easier**

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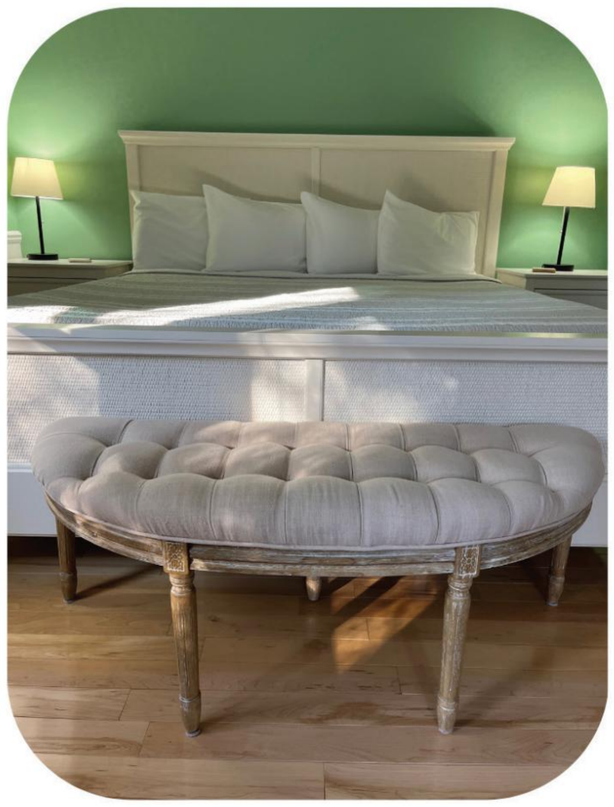

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A Writer's Life...

DURING THE GOLDEN AGE OF TELEVISION ANIMATION

BY JACK OLESKER

Freeway Chat

As Lori weaved through 105 freeway traffic on our way to Mattel's corporate headquarters, she filled me in on our upcoming meeting. I was nervous enough as it was, but as Lori talked I got the distinct feeling she was leaving something out.

Previously on this day I was a confident writer with an impressive and growing list of credits. CBS Head of Children's Programming Judy Price liked me and I did great with everyone during Andy and my visit to the execs at Those Characters From Cleveland. But this meeting was waaaay different.

Even if you factored in that Those Characters From Cleveland was a subsidiary of big deal American Greetings, there was no comparison to my upcoming meeting with Mattel. Big as they were, American Greetings was a greeting card company that realized there was money to be made from creating toys and television series based on their IPs. They weren't toy manufacturers. As for Judy Price, there was no question Judy was one of the most powerful people in children's entertainment. But Mattel…?

Mattel was the world's largest toy company and I was on my way to their worldwide headquarters. Barbie, Hot Wheels, Rainbow Brite. Should we even talk about Masters of the Universe? In 1984, Mattel sold over thirty-five million MOTU action figures. That translated to 95,628 action figures a day, 3,984 an hour, 66.4 a minute…every minute of every hour of every day, twenty-four hours a day. As we got closer to their offices, my "growing list of credits" didn't feel so impressive.

Lori glanced at me and smiled. "Remember, they asked to see you."

Knowing there were a lot of writers with a lot more credentials than me, I asked, "And exactly why did they ask to see me?"

Keeping her eyes on the road, Lori said, "I told them you're handsome."

I spun to her. "What?!" I swallowed hard. "And who is 'them'."

Amused at my unease, Lori said, "Kaaren Lee Brown and Debra Galliani."

"And they are?!"

"Two of the top execs in Children's Entertainment at Mattel."

I looked at a huge Mattel sign towering off the freeway. "Geez, Lori, you really told them I'm handsome?"

She teased, "Aren't you?"

I've said before that I felt humility was an overrated virtue, but now I was having trouble finding the words with which to answer Lori, so I didn't.

Lori eased her car into the exit lane with, "Good looks may not be everything, but in L.A. they're a close second."

Her unabashed candor was killing me. I parried with, "I hope talent's first."

She smiled. "It is, but –"

I cut her off with, "Now I see why you asked me to 'dress nice'."

Her voice even, she said, "At least I didn't ask you to 'act intelligent'." When I look questioningly to her, she said, "Yeah…I heard that story."

As Lori put on her right hand turn signal and drove onto the off ramp leading to Mattel's worldwide corporate headquarters, I couldn't help thinking this was a long way from working in my parents' clothing stores…

HOROSCOPE

FEBRUARY 12-18, 2026

AS INTERPRETED BY SANDY "STAR" BENDT

ARIES MARCH 21—APRIL 19

Friends and associates will be shedding a light on the problems or hard times you are having, which may not feel so comfortable. But it will help you learn more about yourself and will also help you identify the things that are important to you. This is a foreshadowing of what you will be modifying over the next month.

TAURUS APRIL 20—MAY 20

This is the time to pursue career goals, perfect your appearance and align your image with your perspectives. It is through talking with people and getting to know differing perspectives that will help you hone in on what you really see happening in the world, how you feel about it and how you show it.

GEMINI MAY 21—JUNE 21

The real question is, do you value what you do? It's time to distinguish where you are career wise and determine if it is in alignment with the social image you desire. It's not about whether you are liked but if you are viewed as trustworthy and stable. Perhaps, a re-branding of sorts is necessary to ensure success.

CANCER JUNE 22—JULY 22

You already understand what you have that is different from others in your chosen field. Pay attention to these details because this is the foreshadowing of where you will be modifying your career and public image to reflect this difference. This is the time to hone in on your skills, perfect them and capitalize on them.

LEO JULY 23—AUGUST 22

It's time to take things to the next level with your partner or those you deal with on a daily basis. Whether you are looking to balance out the monetary side of things or are hoping for more input with domestic labor, bring things up to speed by being honest about your limitations and being willing to compromise.

VIRGO AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22

It is important to keep interactions with people above board and in line with your career image or work ethic. Avoid people that try to put you in compromising situations or that try to distract you from getting work done in a professional way.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22

There are lessons to be learned in the relationship department and some of them may feel like a restraints to your freedom; mostly a complete change in your daily life to accommodate for another person. This is about opening your heart to love and the acceptance of having to make room for someone's needs.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 21

Allow your family and circle of friends to come and go without judgment or pursuing them into doing something you think is important. There may be some differences that cannot be bridged and the waters will flow anyway, meaning let things stand and flow without input or reaction.

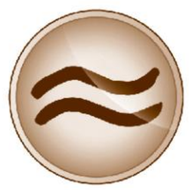
SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22—DECEMBER 21

The truth will come out quite naturally now through conversations and you will have some clarity as to how to bring family and home life into alignment. This is all about working things out thoroughly and not leaving things up to chance. The energy is pushing you to pursue lessons in love and matters of home life.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22—JANUARY 19

The energy this week is all about cultivating a stronger home and family connection, which includes accepting the fact that people are old enough to figure it out. It is important to keep the lines of communication open with family members and to let them have their own opinions and honor their experiences.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 18



There is a stellar force of energy coming your way and it is best put to use by focusing on self improvement, advancing your studies and exercising strong time management skills. Do what needs to be done academically and domestically. Strike while the iron is hot and then take your tea break.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19—MARCH 20

It is time to emerge from your cocoon and embrace the world with a fresh and modern perspective. You have been going through a transformation period for the last two years and the tests are over. The lessons have been taught and now the opportunities to make your moves are on the horizon.

To know oneself is to study oneself in action with another person. — *Bruce Lee*

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Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

			1				9	
	2			6				
				8			1	
	6		7		8	2		
8	7		4		1			
	5							
5					6			9
	8	2			9	5		4
			2			7		

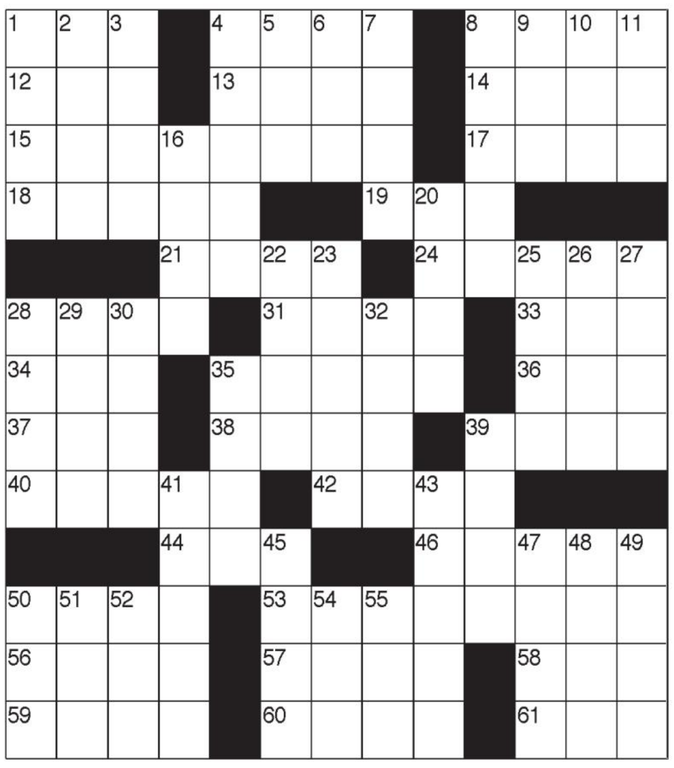
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1 Queen of the fairies
4 Salt
8 Semitic deity
12 Tumor (suf.)
13 Father: Hebrew
14 Discharge
15 Deter (2 words)
17 Ointment
18 Bay window
19 Eur. Economic Community (abbr.)
21 Band
24 Dancer/choreographer
28 Chin. character (longevity)
31 Argyll island
33 Brief life story
34 Amer. Automobile Assn. (abbr.)
35 Average
36 Gelderland city
37 Adjective-forming (suf.)
38 Spiders' nests
39 Same (Lat.)
40 Horse
42 Irish exclamation
44 Group of whales
46 Land of Croesus
50 Luminary
53 Aloeswood
56 Sample tape
57 Leaf division
58 Oriental tea
59 Irish writing
60 Deserve
61 Cry

DOWN

1 Honey-eater bird
2 Cupid
3 E. Indies island
4 Ancient stringed instrument
5 Amer. Bar Assn. (abbr.)
6 Television channel
7 Body of water
8 Pew
9 Church vessel
10 State
11 Limited (abbr.)
16 S.A. rodent
20 And other: abbr. (2 words) (Lat.)
22 Unless, in law
23 Cheese
25 Sleeping
26 Journey
27 Verse
28 Ancient Egypt. city
29 Old-style verb
30 Us dam
32 Freshwater worm
35 Erase
39 Pastoral poem
41 Computer chip
43 Amer. patriot
45 Ravine
47 Physicians, for short
48 Ginkgo tree
49 Melville's captain
50 Carriage
51 Two-year-old sheep
52 Amer. Medical Assn. (abbr.)
54 Port. colony in India
55 Abridged (abbr.)



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To Your Health

COLUMN BY KAREN EDWARDS ND

BETTER BOWEL CARE

At the root of nearly every chronic health issue is a toxic bowel. Throughout my forty years of clinical practice,every patient that came in, for any reason, always left with a bowel cleansing protocol. From bad breath, gas and bloating, constipation, eczema, hair loss, sudden weight gain or loss all stemmed from the same cause. A toxic bowel. Once you start having 'symptoms,' you are well on your way to DIS-ease. When your bowel is toxic, waste circulates through the bloodstream to every organ. Toxinswill settle into weak tissue. Cleaning up your bowel,cleanses your blood, and turns your health around.

We spend our entire lives eating one to three meals a day, snacking, eating sugary treats, processed foods, meat, grains and dairy. Drinking coffee, soda, juices, and maybe alcohol. Our digestive systems are polluted and stagnate. When do you give your bowel any attention to cleansing, detoxing, resting and rebuilding it? Many suffer from the negative effects of its overload.

Bowel disease is on the rise. Leaky gut, Crohn's, Colitis, Gastroenteritis,

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) Hemorrhoids, diverticulitis, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS,) obstruction, even colon cancers.

We are each in charge of our health. Taking the time tochoose what goes into your gut can either cause disease, or prevent it. We need to educate instead of medicate. A Prescription drug will only masque a symptom, we need to treat the cause. It is never too late to clean it up. Cleansing it is vital if you want better health.

The first way to better bowel health is to feed your body natural food. High complex fiber specifically. Fruits, vegetables, nuts seeds, grains, raw probiotic foods and leafy greens. If you eat meat, it should be occasionally, not at every meal or daily. Meat has a slow digestive time and could take up to three days, whereas fruit will digest within 20 minutes. Fruit gives you the nourishment you need, then passes through in a normal bowel movement. Meat, dairy and processed foods can cause bacterial and fungalovergrowth, which will cause parasites to move in. Parasites equal inflammation and eventual disease.

Exercising and dry skin brushing can benefit the health of your colon. (Search on YouTube) A revitalizing broth in place of one meal can start you on the road to recovery. This lessens the load on the colon and will re-mineralizeyour cells. Stuffing our gut and expecting it to digest, is not how it works. It needs rest to rebuild. Stop eating by 6:00 pm. This allows your digestion to rest for 12 hours or more. We cannot digest food when we are motionless andlying flat. Eat in moderation. Eating magnesium rich foods will help with peristalsis, the muscle that moves your food along.

Oat straw tea is high in silicon and can help calm digestion. Stay hydrated. Consume water-rich foods like watermelon, tomatoes, lettuce, and celery. Eat an apple a day.

None of my articles are meant to diagnose, treat, prevent or cure.

Disclaimer: Everything here is for nutritional education and is not meant to diagnose, treat prevent or cure. See your doctor when you have questions.

PET OF THE WEEK

TYRONE

You better call for Tyone, as you will not ask him to leave. And if he has a brother or cousin! He is just over a year old, over 50 pounds, neutered with his vaccinations up-to-date. Tyone. Tyrone will run with you, stay with you, and godly nap on your lap. His ears are always attentive, know how to bepolite, and knows more commands. Tyone has experience with other animals and children almost teenage age. He loves his treats, as well as car rides. Make Tyone (maybe friends) part of of your home today.

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LOCAL INTELLIGENCE
New Buffalo Times
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O	G	A	M	■	E	A	R	N	■	S	O	B	

DEATH NOTICES

THREE OAKS – Theron Childs, 84, of Pullman, Michigan passed away on Saturday, February 07, 2026. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks.

Knights of Columbus present 'Knight's Ball'

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MATT RADEMAKER

The Knights of Columbus Council 14366 hosted its first "A Winter Knight's Ball" Saturday, Feb. 7, at the New Buffalo Yacht Club.

Organized by Knights of Columbus Council 14366, a local council of the Catholic fraternal service organization dedicated to faith, charity, and community service, the event brought together community members in support of those in need. Guests enjoyed this black tie optional fundraising event that included dinner, music by Paul Fleming, a wine tasting from Nitz Wines and a live auction.

Through the generosity of attendees and sponsors, the event raised funds to support the ongoing charitable work of the Knights of Columbus throughout the year.

Council 14366 is one of 16,000 Knights of Columbus councils making up the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization. Founded in 1882 to assist working-class and immigrant Catholics in the United States, today the approximately 2 million members put their faith into action through a broad range of charitable causes locally, nationally and internationally with financial contributions and hands-on service.

Locally, the council purchased a new Ultrasound machine for the Women's Care Center in Niles, providing pregnant women with access to early prenatal imaging services in a free and confidential setting. They also regularly support the Harbor Country Emergency Services, Berrien County Cancer Services, Meals on Wheels, Therapeutic Equestrian Center, Reins of Life and the SHARE Foundation. Through the generosity of the attendees and sponsors at this event, the council will be able to continue contributing to these causes

The Knights meet the first Monday of the month at St. Mary of the Lake Catholic Church in New Buffalo. They're seeking more men to assist the community and charitable efforts. Feel free to reach out to gk14366@mikofc.org."

To join them for free, visit www.kofc.org/join and enter St. Mary of the Lake as the parish. — STAFF REPORTS

Lauren and Matt Patruno

Fran and Grand Knight Jeff Zochalski

Kevin and Migs Murray

Gathering in the New Buffalo Yacht Club at the Knight's Ball

Sharon McKernin, Julie and Tim Shaughnessy, Lisa McKernin and Joey DiMaggio

A cake celebrating the first Knight's Ball was enjoyed by guests

Guests enjoy dinner at the Knight's Ball

Passaro, Kahne, Taylor, DeFrancesco, & Thompson
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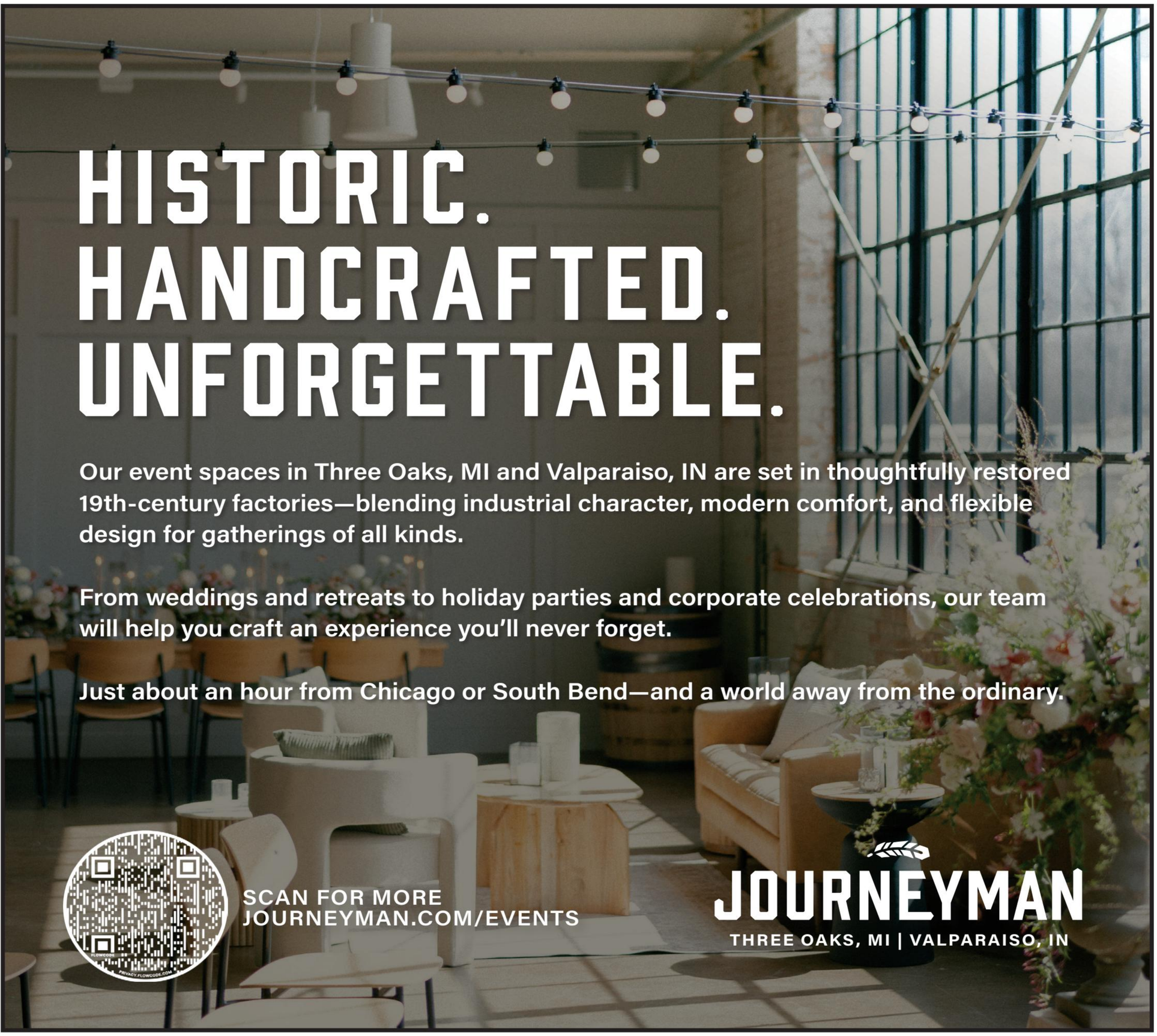
Saturday men's bible study 915 ET in person and zoom
Saturday women's bible study 1030 ET on zoom
1615 E Buffalo St. New Buffalo, Mi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